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# Opioids

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## Opioids

**Street names: China Girl, Flat Line, OC, Oxy, Percs, T3, TNT**

Opiates are a family of drugs that are used to treat pain. They are also depressants or 'downers'.

Prescription opiates include hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, morphine, codeine and fentanyl, among others.

Illegal opiates include heroin and carfentanil or prescription opiates that are not being used by the person they were meant for.

### Are opioids addictive?

When opioids are taken for a short time and under medical supervision they are generally safe and there is less risk for dependence and addiction.

Taking opioids regularly will build up a tolerance, meaning you need more and more of the drug to feel its effects.

### Are opioids dangerous?

Opioids can be dangerous when taken without medical supervision - the biggest risk is an overdose where a person's breathing may slow down or stop.

Fentanyl is a very potent drug. It is 100 times stronger than morphine so even the smallest amounts (the size of two grains of sand) can lead to overdose. Carfentanil is even more dangerous.

Injecting opioids increases the risk of infection, blood poisoning, and collapsed veins.

Sharing needles increases the risk of getting HIV and Hepatitis B or C.

Mixing opioids with alcohol, anxiety or sleeping pills, or other opioids can increase the risk of overdose.





## Opioids and Pregnancy

It is safest NOT to use opioids while pregnant.

Opioids are passed to the baby through the placenta.

Using opioids regularly and in high doses may cause miscarriage or the baby to be born small and underweight, which can lead to health problems.

Developing babies exposed to opioids may have withdrawal symptoms once they are born.

This means after the baby is born he may need to stay in the hospital for observation or treatment.



## Opioids and Breastfeeding

Opioids pass into a mother's breastmilk.

The effects on your baby of taking high doses of opioids while breastfeeding over a long time are unknown. Talk to your health care provider before starting to breastfeed.

If you are taking opioids prescribed by your doctor, it is safe to breastfeed your baby as long as you only take the amount prescribed and only take it for as long as prescribed.

If you are on methadone treatment (below) it is safe to breastfeed.

If you decided to stop breastfeeding while on methadone treatment, talk to a health care provider as your baby may experience withdrawal.



## How do I quit?

If you are using opioids, it can be hard on you and your baby to stop suddenly.

Withdrawal can increase the risk of miscarriage or the baby being born early.

Talk with a health care provider about ways to reduce your opioid use that are safer for you and your baby.

## Methadone Treatment

Methadone is commonly used to treat addiction to opioid drugs including prescription pills.

Methadone maintenance treatment can help prevent withdrawal and cravings.

Methadone is slow releasing, so it only needs to be taken once a day. This can help people stabilize their lives.

Being on methadone also creates a more stable environment for your baby to grow and develop!





# Signs of Opioid Overdose



## Feels like:

- you can't stay awake
- you have no energy or strength
- you can't walk or talk

## Looks like:

- slow or no pulse
- slow or no breathing
- skin feels cold and may be pale or blue
- can't wake up or talk
- very small pupils



**If someone overdoses roll the person onto their side and call 911**

## Using Safer

If you are using opioids, there are ways to be safer.

### Before you start:

- Use with someone you trust in case of overdose
- Find a safe and quiet place where you don't have to hurry
- Clean your hands and the injection site with an alcohol swab
- Have a Naloxone kit with you (see below)



### When injecting opioids:

- Use a new clean needle every time
- Start with a small amount if you're not sure how strong it is
- Plump the vein by using a warm compress and a tie above the elbow
- Pick a different injection site to reduce the risk of infection
- Start with the veins closest to the wrist and work your way up
- Avoid using your neck and groin for injecting as these are the most risky
- Insert the needle with the hole (bevel) pointing up
- Flag the needle by pushing the plunger in a little, then pulling back until you see blood in the needle. This will tell you if the needle is in right.

## Naloxone Kits

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an overdose caused by opioids.

If you have injected opioid drugs in the last 6 months you can get a free take-home Naloxone kit from Street Connections.

Street Connections is located at 496 Hargrave Street and is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-4:30. You do not need an appointment.

If you are covered under First Nations Inuit Health, you can get a free Naloxone Kit through the pharmacy.

Bring a person you are close to who may be there if you overdose. It is important that this person also gets training on how to use Naloxone.





# What can I do if I use?

It may be a struggle to not use opioids, but every little step you take helps you and your baby. Steps could be to:

- Talk to your health care provider about how to access a methadone clinic
- Find ways to use that keep you safe (see page 3)
- Take care of your health

Taking care of yourself also helps take care of your baby.

Here are some things you can do:

- Attend your prenatal appointments
- Be active when you can, rest when you need
- Eat foods that you like that have lots of nutrients - vegetables and fruits, milk or milk alternatives, whole wheat grains, fish, meats and alternatives
- Drink lots of water
- Cut down or quit smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol
- Reduce stress - talk with a friend, take a bath, go for a walk



## You Are Not Alone!



# Where To Find Help

**There are lots of places that offer support and treatment.**

**Speak with a worker about which one may be right for you.**

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM).....	204-944-6200
AFM Women's Centre and Family Program.....	204-944-6229
Aboriginal Health & Wellness.....	204-925-3700
Behavioural Health Foundation.....	204-269-3430
CARI-Clearview Addiction Rehabilitation Institute.....	204-784-2840
Insight Mentoring Program.....	204-925-3750
Klinic Crisis Line (24 hour).....	204-786-8686
Manitoba Addiction Treatment Centres.....	204-582-9050
M.I.N.E. Methadone Intervention and Needle Exchange.....	204-944-6200
Mothering Project, Mount Carmel Clinic, Intake Line.....	204-479-0203
Native Addictions Council of Manitoba.....	204-586-8395
OATS-Opiate Addiction Treatment Services, Intake Line.....	204-509-6410
River Point Centre.....	1-855-662-6605
Salvation Army- Anchorage Program.....	204-946-9401

